

Fox Theatre ramps up security

Metal detectors at entrances included in new safety features.

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The Fox Theatre is adding another layer of security with the installation of metal detectors at its entrances.

A soft roll-out of the process began last month at a screening for its Summer Film Festival, as well as the Gucci Mane concert, and it worked so well, it's staying.

"This is something we've talked about for some time," Allan Vella,

president and CEO of the Fox Theatre, said in an exclusive interview with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"As an industry, we've seen the move to walk-through metal detectors, especially with the NFL, the NHL, the NBA," Vella said. "The theater and performing arts industry hasn't moved as quickly. But we study what everyone is doing and, of course, can't help but observe what is going on around the world."

The typical set-up for a full-house event will have eight to 10 metal detectors in the arcade area as guests head toward the main entrance doors. Vella said

he is cognizant of patrons' time and, ideally, the process of standing in line; removing cellphones, keys and wallets from pockets and handbags; and walking through the detector will take between five and seven minutes.

Guests will not have to remove shoes, belts, jewelry or watches.

It's a practice no different than what already has been implemented at other Atlanta venues, including Philips Arena, the Georgia Dome and Infinite Energy Center. As well, nothing has changed on the Fox's list of prohibited items, which includes firearms,

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President and CEO of the Fox Theatre

The Fox Theatre is implementing permanent metal detectors to add another layer of safety at shows. MICHAEL WEST

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pocket knives, utility tools, aerosol cans, laser pointers, bottles and other items. The list can be perused at fox-theatre.org.

Vella and his staff encourage patrons to arrive no less than 30 minutes before a show to allow ample time

to pass through security and get settled comfortably.

The next major event at the venue where the new security measures will be implemented is the Aug. 9-14 run of the Broadway musical "If/Then." Broadway in Atlanta subscribers and those who purchased tickets via Ticketmaster will receive an email reminding them of the new procedure.

Vella said he realizes that, as with any change, there is the possibility of grouching from some patrons. But he believes those numbers will be small.

"The large majority of people who have already experienced (the process) have been appreciative," he said. "The goal is to have a safe environment, and the majority will understand that."